

A decorative blue floral border with intricate scrollwork and leaf patterns, framing the central text.

# **GUZ 08 Ruth**

*Bible Commentary:  
David Guzik TEV - VIII*

**David Guzik**

**David Guziks' Commentary On**  
**08 Ruth**  
**Biblical Text – TEV (Good News Bible)**

**Naomi Widowed**

Rth 1:1 (1-2) Long ago, in the days before Israel had a king, there was a famine in the land. So a man named Elimelech, who belonged to the clan of Ephrath and who lived in Bethlehem in Judah, went with his wife Naomi and their two sons Mahlon and Chilion to live for a while in the country of Moab. While they were living there,

Rth 1:3 Elimelech died, and Naomi was left alone with her two sons,

**Rth 1:4** who married Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. About ten years later

Rth 1:5 Mahlon and Chilion also died, and Naomi was left all alone, without husband or sons.

**Ruth's Loyalty to Naomi**

Rth 1:6 Some time later Naomi heard that the LORD had blessed his people by giving them good crops; so she got ready to leave Moab with her daughters-in-law.

Rth 1:7 They started out together to go back to Judah, but on the way

Rth 1:8 she said to them, "Go back home and stay with your mothers. May the LORD be as good to you as you have been to me and to those who have died.

Rth 1:9 And may the LORD make it possible for each of you to marry again and have a home." So Naomi kissed them good-bye. But they started crying

Rth 1:10 and said to her, "No! We will go with you to your people."

Rth 1:11 "You must go back, my daughters," Naomi answered. "Why do you want to come with me? Do you think I could have sons again for you to marry?"

Rth 1:12 Go back home, for I am too old to get married again. Even if I thought there was still hope, and so got married tonight and had sons,

Rth 1:13 would you wait until they had grown up? Would this keep you from marrying someone else? No, my daughters, you know that's impossible. The LORD has turned against me, and I feel very sorry for you."

Rth 1:14 Again they started crying. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye and went back home, but Ruth held on to her.

Rth 1:15 So Naomi said to her, "Ruth, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her god. Go back home with her."

Rth 1:16 But Ruth answered, "Don't ask me to leave you! Let me go with you. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.

Rth 1:17 Wherever you die, I will die, and that is where I will be buried. May the LORD's worst punishment come upon me if I let anything but death separate me from you!"

Rth 1:18 When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more.

### **Naomi and Ruth Return**

Rth 1:19 They went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived, the whole town became excited, and the women there exclaimed, "Is this really Naomi?"

Rth 1:20 "Don't call me Naomi," she answered; "call me Marah, because Almighty God has made my life bitter.

Rth 1:21 When I left here, I had plenty, but the LORD has brought me back without a thing. Why call me Naomi when

the LORD Almighty has condemned me and sent me trouble?"

Rth 1:22 This, then, was how Naomi came back from Moab with Ruth, her Moabite daughter-in-law. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the barley harvest was just beginning.

## **Ruth 1:1-22**

### **Ruth 1 - Ruth's Journey**

#### **A. Background: Elimelech and his sons.**

##### *1. (1) A sojourn in Moab.*

**Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.**

a. **In the days when the Judges ruled:** This account begins in the closing days of the Judges, a 400-year period of general anarchy and oppression when the Israelites were not ruled by kings, but by periodic deliverers whom God raised up when the nation sought Him again.

i. Notable among the Judges were Gideon, Samson, and Deborah. Each of these were raised up by God, not to rule as kings, but to lead Israel during a specific challenge, and then to go back to obscurity.

ii. The **days when the Judges ruled** were actually dark days for Israel; the period was characterized by the phrase *everyone did what was right in his own eyes* (Jdg 17:6; Jdg 18:1; Jdg 19:1; Jdg 21:25).

b. **A certain man of Bethlehem:** In these days, a man from **Bethlehem** left the land of Israel to **sojourn in the country of Moab**, because of famine. Bethlehem was a rich agricultural area (the city name means "House

of Bread”), but times were tough, so he went to the pagan land of Moab.

i. To do so, he had to hike through the desolate Jericho pass, through the Judean wilderness near the Dead Sea, going across the Jordan River, into the land of Moab. This was a definite departure from the Promised Land of Israel, and a return towards the wilderness from which God had delivered Israel hundreds of years before. These were clearly steps in the *wrong* direction.

c. **A famine in the land:** God specifically promised there would always be plenty in the land if Israel was obedient. Therefore, **a famine in the land** meant that Israel, as a nation, was not obedient unto the LORD (Deu 11:13-17).

d. **Went to sojourn:** This means to leave with the intention to return. The next verse tells us the name of the man was *Elimelech* and his intention of short visit turned into ten, tragedy-filled years - and Elimelech never returned to Israel. The name *Elimelech* means “God is king” - but he didn’t really live as if God was his king.

## 2. (2-5) Tragedy in Moab.

**The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there. Then Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. Now they took wives of the women of Moab: the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about ten years. Then both Mahlon and Chilion also died; so the woman survived her two sons and her husband.**

a. **Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died:** When Elimelech and his family came to Moab, they did not find life easier. Elimelech soon died, and his wife Naomi was left to care for their two boys, Mahlon and Chilion.

i. It is hard to say that this was the direct hand of God's judgment against them. It is sometimes difficult to discern why tragic things happen. What is certain is that the change of scenery didn't make things better.

ii. We sometimes think we can move away from our problems, but find we just bring them with us. No matter where you go, you bring yourself with you - so the same problems can continue in a different place.

b. **Now they took wives of the women of Moab:** Mahlon and Chilion grew, and took wives among the Moabite women, named Orpah and Ruth. Again, this was not in obedience to God; God commanded the Israelites to not marry among the pagan nations surrounding them.

c. **Both Mahlon and Chilion died:** As time went on (**about ten years**) Naomi's sons died. So now there were three childless widows - Naomi and her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth.

i. To be a childless widow was to be among the lowest, most disadvantaged classes in the ancient world. There was no one to support you, and you had to live on the generosity of strangers. Naomi had no family in Moab, and no one else to help her. It was a desperate situation.

## **B. The return to Judah.**

1. (6-7) *The three widows head back to Judah.*

**Then she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had**

**visited His people by giving them bread. Therefore she went out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.**

a. **She had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited His people:** From distant Moab, Naomi heard that God was doing good things back in Israel. She wanted to be part of the good things that God was doing.

i. Our life with God should make others want to come back to the LORD just by looking at our life. Our walk with the LORD should be something that makes others say, "I want some of that also!"

b. **She went out from the place where she was:** This set Naomi apart from many other people. Many hear of the good things God is doing in the lives of others, and only *wish* they could have some of it - instead of actually setting out to receive it. Naomi could have stayed in Moab all of her life wishing things were different, but she did something to receive what God had to give her.

2. (8-9) *Naomi petitions her daughters-in-law to go back to Moab.*

**And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.**

a. **Go, return each to her mother's house:** By all common sense, this was the wise thing to do. Orpah and Ruth had stronger family ties in Moab than they did with Naomi, so it made sense for them to stay in Moab instead of going to a new land - Israel - with Naomi.

**b. The LORD deal kindly with you... The LORD grant that you may find rest:** With these words Naomi freely blessed them. She prayed that they would remarry (**each in the house of her husband**).

i. **Deal kindly** is the ancient Hebrew word *hesed*. "*Hesed* encompasses deeds of mercy performed by a more powerful party for the benefit of the weaker one." (Huey)

ii. In Rth 1:9, Naomi described marriage as a place of **rest: The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband**. God intends that each marriage be a place and source, of rest, peace, and refreshment in life.

**c. She kissed them... they lifted up their voices and wept:** This emotion shown is evidence of the real relationship of love between Naomi and her daughters-in-law.

*3. (10-13) Naomi pleads with her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab.*

**And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people." But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, *if* I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!"**

**a. Are there still sons in my womb:** According to the laws of ancient Israel, if a young woman was left

widowed, without having had a son, then one of her deceased husband's brothers was responsible for being a "surrogate father" and providing her with a son. Naomi here says that she has no other sons to give either Orpah or Ruth.

i. Trapp on **even if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons**: "Without having a husband, she doth not once think of having children, as many wantons and light-skirts do; making themselves whores, and their children bastards, and all for satisfying the rage of present lust, though after they repent with grief and shame."

b. **The hand of the LORD has gone out against me**: This obviously weighed heavily on Naomi's heart and mind. She felt that the calamity which came upon her family came because they were disobedient, probably in leaving the Promised Land of Israel and marrying their sons to Moabite women.

i. Perhaps Naomi felt a particular guilt; perhaps she was the one who pushed to move out of Israel, and who pushed to marry off the sons.

c. **The hand of the LORD has gone out against me**: Despite this feeling, Naomi is going back to the land of Israel - and going back to her God. Though she felt that the **hand of the LORD has gone out against me**, she did not grow bitter against God. She returned to Him in repentance, knowing that the answer is drawing *closer to* Him, not going *further from* Him.

i. Naomi didn't accuse God of doing something wrong against her. She acknowledged His total control over all circumstances. It was actually an expression of trust in Him.

ii. If Naomi was bitter or angry against God, she probably would have gone another way - *further* from the God of Israel, rather than back to Him. Instead, she showed that she trusted the sovereignty of God, and knew that despite her personal calamities, He is a good God who blesses.

iii. What Naomi could not see is that the hand of the LORD would go out *for* her shortly! There is never reason for us to despair if we believe **the hand of the LORD has gone out against me**. If we will return to Him, His hand will go out *for us* again! Naomi had no idea - not the slightest - of how greatly God was going to bless her in a short time.

4. (14) *Orpah stays in Moab; Ruth continues on with Naomi.*

**Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.**

a. **They lifted up their voices and wept again:** Both Orpah and Ruth felt deeply; both loved Naomi; both were anxious about the future. But a choice had to be made, and Orpah chose to stay in Moab, while Ruth **clung** to Naomi.

b. **Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her:** There comes a place in our following after God where it comes down to

*doing*. Ruth and Orpah both felt the same feelings, but Ruth *did* differently than Orpah.

i. Some are content with feeling Christian feelings - with feeling a love for God, with feeling a love for His Word, with feeling a love for His people. But what will you *do*? We are glad that God didn't just feel His love for us; instead, *For God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son.* (Joh 3:16)

c. **Orpah kissed her mother-in-law:** What happened to Orpah? Of course, we don't know. But men have always concocted traditions to make up for what they don't know. Jewish traditions say this request of Naomi came four miles outside of Moab; and that Orpah shed only four tears over the thought of parting from her mother-in-law Naomi. But the rabbis go on to say that in recompense for the four miles that she went with Naomi, Orpah gave birth to four sons - Goliath and his three brothers.

5. (15-18) *Ruth's eloquent statement of faith.*

**And she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people *shall be* my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, if *anything but* death parts you and me." When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her.**

a. **Look, your sister-in-law has gone:** Naomi did what she could to discourage Ruth from coming with her back to Israel. It wasn't that Naomi didn't want Ruth to come, but she didn't want a fair-weather friend either.

b. **Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people:** This was a noble - even outstanding - friend-to-friend commitment. But Ruth's commitment to Naomi went even further: **And your God, [will be] my God.**

i. This was more than change of address. Ruth was willing to forsake the Moabite gods she grew up with and embrace the God of Israel. She was deciding to

follow the LORD. This Gentile woman, once far from God, had drawn near to Him.

ii. **And your God**, [will be] **my God** meant that Naomi's relationship with God made an impact on Ruth. This is striking, because Naomi did not have an easy life. She had been widowed, had lost both her sons, and believed that she had caused each calamity by her disobedience. Yet she still honored and loved the LORD.

iii. People should be able to look at your life, just as Ruth looked at Naomi's, and say "I want your God to be my God." Your trust in God, and turning towards Him in *tough* times, will often be the thing that draws others to the LORD.

c. **Your God, my God**: Ten years of Naomi's compromise in Moab never made Ruth confess her allegiance to the God of Israel. Yet as soon as Naomi stood and said, "I'm going back to the God of Israel, I'll put my fate in His hands" Ruth stood with her. If you think you will persuade your friends or relatives to Jesus by your compromise, you are mistaken. Perhaps you are sincere, but you are mistaken. Only a bold stand for Jesus will really do it.

i. "Ah! You will never win any soul to the right by a compromise with the wrong. It is decision for Christ and his truth that has the greatest power in the family, and the greatest power in the world, too." (Spurgeon)

d. **The LORD do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me**: Ruth had little knowledge of the true God, the God of Israel - but she knew He was a God of fairness and justice, so He could be called upon to hold Ruth accountable to this promise.

6. (19-21) *Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem.*

**Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?"**

a. **The two of them went until they came to Bethlehem:** It was a long walk from Moab to Bethlehem, and the trip was mostly uphill. We can imagine along the way, Ruth asking her mother-in-law Naomi all about the God of Israel and the land of Israel.

b. **All the city was excited because of them:** Bethlehem was just a large village; everyone in the village would have known everyone else and remembered those who had left years ago.

c. **Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara:** The name **Naomi** means "pleasant"; the name **Mara** means "bitter." Naomi used this to tell the people of Bethlehem that her time away from Israel, her time away from the God of Israel, had not been pleasant - it was bitter.

i. Naomi wasn't a phony. She wasn't going to go home, pretend everything was fine, and be "pleasant." She was going to be honest and say "Here I am and my life has been bitter."

d. **The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me... the LORD has brought me home again empty... the LORD has testified against me:** Naomi was not afraid to see the hand of God in all her calamity.

i. Naomi knew that the tragedy that came into her life was not because of fate, chance, or blind fortune. She felt the tragedies were an example of God's affliction because she could not see the end of His plan. But she knew there was a sovereign God of heaven and didn't think she had just run into a string of "bad luck."

ii. Yet, in the midst of all these bitter circumstances, Naomi was *not* bitter against the LORD. We can imagine one of the villagers asking, "Naomi, if God has dealt very bitterly with you, if the LORD has brought you home empty, if the LORD has testified against you, then why have you come back?" And she would have said, "Because I want to get right with Him again. Things have been terrible, and the answer isn't in going further from God, but in drawing closer to Him."

iii. Not everyone reacts to trials the way Naomi did. "Many are humbled, but not humble; low, but not lowly. These have lost the fruit of their afflictions... and are therefore most miserable." (Trapp)

## 7. (22) ***So Naomi returned.***

**So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabite her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.**

a. **So Naomi returned:** Naomi came back repentant and honest. She has felt that *the Almighty has afflicted me*. But in the coming chapters, it will be shown the Almighty will bless her. If only she could see it!

b. **Now they came to Bethlehem:** It would have been easy for Naomi to focus on what she had lost. She had lost a husband, two sons, and one daughter-in-law. She

had lost all kinds of material possessions. All she had left was one daughter-in-law, Ruth. But through that one thing she had left, God was going to bring unbelievable blessing into her life.

i. All the good that happens in the future chapters begins here: With Naomi's godly repentance and honesty. It will make a difference not only in her life, but in the life of her daughter-in-law Ruth - and in the destiny of the nation Israel - and in your eternal salvation.

ii. It is possible for God to accomplish amazing things both for now and eternity, if we will turn towards Him today, not only in our feelings, but also in our actions.

## **Ruth Meets Boaz**

**Rth 2:1** Naomi had a relative named Boaz, a rich and influential man who belonged to the family of her husband Elimelech.

Rth 2:2 One day Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields to gather the grain that the harvest workers leave. I am sure to find someone who will let me work with him." Naomi answered, "Go ahead, daughter."

Rth 2:3 So Ruth went out to the fields and walked behind the workers, picking up the heads of grain which they left. It so happened that she was in a field that belonged to Boaz.

Rth 2:4 Some time later Boaz himself arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the workers. "The LORD be with you!" he said. "The LORD bless you!" they answered.

Rth 2:5 Boaz asked the man in charge, "Who is that young woman?"

Rth 2:6 The man answered, "She is the foreigner who came back from Moab with Naomi.

Rth 2:7 She asked me to let her follow the workers and gather grain. She has been working since early morning and

has just now stopped to rest for a while under the shelter."

Rth 2:8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Let me give you some advice. Don't gather grain anywhere except in this field. Work with the women here;

Rth 2:9 watch them to see where they are reaping and stay with them. I have ordered my men not to molest you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and drink from the water jars that they have filled."

Rth 2:10 Ruth bowed down with her face touching the ground, and said to Boaz, "Why should you be so concerned about me? Why should you be so kind to a foreigner?"

Rth 2:11 Boaz answered, "I have heard about everything that you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband died. I know how you left your father and mother and your own country and how you came to live among a people you had never known before.

Rth 2:12 May the LORD reward you for what you have done. May you have a full reward from the LORD God of Israel, to whom you have come for protection!"

Rth 2:13 Ruth answered, "You are very kind to me, sir. You have made me feel better by speaking gently to me, even though I am not the equal of one of your servants."

Rth 2:14 At mealtime Boaz said to Ruth, "Come and have a piece of bread, and dip it in the sauce." So she sat with the workers, and Boaz passed some roasted grain to her. She ate until she was satisfied, and she still had some food left over.

Rth 2:15 (15-16) After she had left to go and gather grain, Boaz ordered the workers, "Let her gather grain even where the bundles are lying, and don't say anything to stop her. Besides that, pull out some heads of grain from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up."

Rth 2:17 So Ruth gathered grain in the field until evening, and when she had beaten it out, she found she had nearly

twenty-five pounds.

Rth 2:18 She took the grain back into town and showed her mother-in-law how much she had gathered. She also gave her the food left over from the meal.

Rth 2:19 Naomi asked her, "Where did you gather all this grain today? Whose field have you been working in? May God bless the man who took an interest in you!" So Ruth told Naomi that she had been working in a field belonging to a man named Boaz.

Rth 2:20 "May the LORD bless Boaz!" Naomi exclaimed. "The LORD always keeps his promises to the living and the dead." And she went on, "That man is a close relative of ours, one of those responsible for taking care of us."

Rth 2:21 Then Ruth said, "Best of all, he told me to keep gathering grain with his workers until they finish the harvest."

Rth 2:22 Naomi said to Ruth, "Yes, daughter, it will be better for you to work with the women in Boaz' field. You might be molested if you went to someone else's field."

Rth 2:23 So Ruth worked with them and gathered grain until all the barley and wheat had been harvested. And she continued to live with her mother-in-law.

## **Ruth 2:1-23**

### **Ruth 2 – Ruth's Work as a Gleaner**

#### **A. Ruth gleanes in Boaz's field.**

##### *1. (1) Naomi's kinsman: **Boaz**.*

**There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz.**

- a. **Naomi had a kinsman:** Naomi was related to this man Boaz through her deceased husband, Elimelech. We don't know exactly how he was related, but he was.

b. **A man of great wealth:** During the time of famine, when Elimelech, Naomi, and their whole family had left the Promised Land and went to Moab, Boaz had stayed behind - and God provided for him. In fact, God made Boaz **a man of great wealth**.

i. Ten years before, Naomi and her family made a choice, and it was a choice made in a hard time – a time of famine. But they didn't *have* to make the wrong choice they did. The people of Bethlehem had not perished from hunger. They were still there. And they were blessed more than Naomi's family.

ii. Sometimes we justify wrong choices because of difficult circumstances. But God will strengthen us, and bless us, to make the right choice, even in difficult circumstances.

iii. "The exact expression rendered *a mighty man of wealth* is elsewhere translated 'a mighty man of valour' (e.g., Jdg 11:1). We perhaps get the force of it by thinking of our word 'knight.'" (Morris)

c. **A kinsman:** This introduces an important word in the book of Ruth - the ancient Hebrew word *goel*. To say that Boaz was *a goel* (a kinsman) was more than saying he was a relative; it was saying that he was a special family representative. He was a chieftain in the family.

2. (2-3) *Ruth happens upon Boaz's field.*

**So Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain after *him* in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter." Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the part of the field *belonging* to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.**

a. **Please, let me go to the field, and glean heads of grain:** Lev 19:9-10 commanded farmers in Israel that they should not completely harvest their fields. They were commanded to “cut corners” in harvesting, and always leave some behind. Also, if they happened to drop a bundle of grain, they were commanded to leave it on the ground and to not pick it up.

i. This was one of the social assistance programs in Israel. Farmers were not to completely harvest their fields, so the poor and needy could come and glean the remains for themselves.

ii. This is a wonderful way of helping the poor. It commanded the farmers to have a generous heart, and it commanded the poor to be active and work for their food – and a way for them to provide for their own needs with dignity.

b. **Then she left:** So, Ruth, on her own initiative, set out to glean in the fields to support her and her mother-in-law Naomi. This showed a wonderfully hard-working spirit in Ruth, and it was spiritual also – she would not have been more spiritual to sit back at home and pray for food.

c. **She happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz:** It says that Ruth **happened** to come to that place and certainly, that is how it seemed to her. But it was not how it actually came to pass. Ruth came to that field because God was guiding her.

i. This shows us some of the wonderful way that the invisible hand of God works. If Ruth would have stayed home and waited for a “spiritual” feeling, she probably might have waited a long time - and still probably would have gone to the wrong field. Instead, Ruth experienced the very *natural* moving of the *supernatural* hand of God.

- ii. Many times when we are really walking in the Spirit, we can only see the invisible hand of God by looking back. If we spend too much time trying to look for His hand ahead of us, we can make problems for our self.

### *3. (4-7) Boaz learns of Ruth.*

**Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you!" And they answered him, "The LORD bless you!" Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "Whose young woman *is* this?" So the servant who was in charge of the reapers answered and said, "It *is* the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. And she said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house."**

a. **The LORD be with you:** This shows us something of the heart and character of Boaz. Apparently, his workers loved him and had a good relationship with him. You can often tell the real character of a man in authority by seeing how he relates to his staff and by how they think of him.

b. **And she said, "Please let me glean and gather":** As the supervisor reported to Boaz, he told of Ruth's submissive attitude. There is a sense in which the gleaning was hers by *right* - after all, she could have quoted Lev 19:9-10 back at him. But she kindly and properly asked for the right to gather in his field.

c. **So she came and has continued from morning until now:** Ruth may not have known it, but she was under inspection. The supervisor was looking at what kind of job she did and he was impressed that she did a

good job. And the fact that she did a good job was important, because it made a good impression on Boaz.

i. We are under inspection also. At times when we don't know it, we are being watched by others to see how we will walk with God. And what they see will make a *difference*.

#### 4. (8-9) Boaz speaks kindly to Ruth.

**Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes *be* on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn."**

a. **Stay close by my young women:** These were Boaz's female field workers, who tied together the cut stalks of grain. Boaz told Ruth to stay close to them, so she would be well taken care of.

b. **Do not go to glean in another field:** God was blessing Ruth already and all because He guided her to Boaz's field. Boaz knew that if Ruth stayed in his fields, she would be blessed and find:

- In Boaz's field, Ruth would find *companionship* (among the **young women**).
- In Boaz's field, Ruth would find *protection* (**Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you?**).
- In Boaz's field, Ruth would find *refreshment* (**when you are thirsty**).

i. The *kindness* of Boaz was wonderful. At this time, we have no indication of a romantic attraction between Boaz and Ruth and we have no idea how

Ruth looked (even if she was pretty, she was probably pretty ragged from a whole day of hard work). Yet Boaz extended this kindness to her.

ii. We find it pretty easy to be kind to others when we can see a potential pay-off from the investment of our kindness. Yet true kindness is shown when we extend ourselves to others who, as far as we can see, have nothing to give us.

5. (10-13) *Ruth thanks Boaz for his kindness.*

**So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, "Why have I found favor in your eyes, that you should take notice of me, since I *am* a foreigner?" And Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and *how* you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge." Then she said, "Let me find favor in your sight, my lord; for you have comforted me, and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants."**

a. **Why have I found favor in your eyes:** Ruth's attitude was wonderful. Some of us would have said, "Well it's about time someone noticed! I've been working hard all day. Now God will give me the blessings that I deserve.

i. We never see Ruth asking why all the *hard things* have come upon her in life. Instead, she asks why this *good thing* has come. This is a significant difference in attitude.

b. **Since I am a foreigner:** This was constantly on Ruth's mind. She was a Moabitess, and not an Israelite. She knew that on the basis of national background, she didn't belong. This made Boaz's kindness to her all the more precious.

i. The Bible says that we should be kind to the strangers among us, but this also applies on another level. Since our society is no longer structured around the *family*, for many people, their most important circle of association is their *friends*. Sociologists call this "tribalization" - we become part of a little "tribe," a little circle of friends. The command to love the stranger means that we should not only associate with those of our own tribe, and that we should always welcome those outside of our tribe.

c. **It has been reported to me:** This is a dynamic of small-town life; everybody knows everybody else's business. Yet it also shows that Ruth's devotion to Naomi mattered - it was noticed.

d. **The LORD repay your work and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel:** Fittingly, Boaz encouraged Ruth as if she were a new convert to the God of Israel. In many ways, Ruth stands as an example of a new convert.

- She put her trust in the God of Israel.
- She has left her former associates.
- She had come in among strangers.
- She was very low in her own eyes.
- She found protection under the wings of God.

i. In the same way, older Christians should be like Boaz unto younger Christians who are like Ruth. "Observe that he saluted her with words of tender

encouragement; for this is precisely what I want all the elder Christians among you to do to those who are the counterparts of Ruth.... I want you to make a point of looking out the young converts, and speaking to them goodly words, and comfortable words, whereby they may be cheered and strengthened." (Spurgeon)

ii. Significantly, though these words were said to Ruth, they were also *a prayer unto God for Ruth*. Christians should pray for one another, especially older Christians should pray for new converts.

e. **The LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge:** Boaz especially knew of Ruth's commitment to the God of Israel. This was his way of showing kindness and encouragement to a young believer in the LORD.

i. **Under whose wings:** This is a beautiful picture. "The imagery is probably that of a tiny bird snuggling under the wings of a foster-mother. It gives a picture of trust and security (cf. Psa 17:8; Psa 36:7; Psa 63:7)." (Morris)

f. **Let me find favor in your sight:** This was a very polite way of saying "thank you" to Boaz. Ruth was almost overwhelmed by his kindness, and was polite enough to say, "Thank you."

6. (14-16) *Boaz continues to show great favor to Ruth.*

**Now Boaz said to her at mealtime, "Come here, and eat of the bread, and dip your piece of bread in the vinegar." So she sat beside the reapers, and he passed parched *grain* to her; and she ate and was satisfied, and kept some back. And when she rose up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not**

**reproach her. Also let *grain* from the bundles fall purposely for her; leave *it* that she may glean, and do not rebuke her."**

a. **Dip your bread in the vinegar:** Perhaps now, we see the first hint of a romance. Boaz showed great kindness and favor to Ruth at mealtime. It would be enough to have just invited her, but he also invited her to share fully in the meal, even the privileged dipping.

b. **She ate and was satisfied, and kept some back:** Ruth also may be awakening to some romance towards Boaz; she **kept some back**. She did not eat all that was offered to her, meaning that she didn't want to seem like a greedy eater in front of Boaz, and that she was sensible enough to take some home to Naomi.

i. Ruth was satisfied, because she answered the generous invitation of Boaz. She was not one of the reapers, but **she sat beside the reapers** and ate as if she was one of them and **she ate and was satisfied**. In the same way, those outside the Kingdom of God and its promises can sit among the reapers, at the invitation of Jesus, and by faith they can eat and be **satisfied**.

ii. "'She did eat, and was satisfied.' Your *head* shall be satisfied with the precious truth which Christ reveals; your *heart* shall be content with Jesus, as the altogether lovely object of affection; your *hope* shall be satisfied, for whom have you in heaven but Christ? Your *desire* shall be satiated, for what can even the hunger of your desire wish for more than 'to know Christ, and to be found in him.' You shall find Jesus fill your *conscience*, till it is at perfect peace; he shall fill your *judgment*, till you know the certainty of his teachings; he shall fill your *memory* with recollections of what he did, and fill your *imagination* with the

prospects of what he is yet to do. You shall be 'satisfied.'" (Spurgeon)

c. **Let her glean even among the sheaves:** This was more generous than the command in Lev 19:9-10. Boaz would allow Ruth to take some from among the already gathered sheaves of grain.

d. **Let some grain from the bundles fall purposefully for her:** This was also beautiful. Boaz wanted to bless Ruth, but he didn't want to dishonor her dignity by making her a charity case. So, he allowed some grain to fall, supposedly on accident, so that she could pick it up.

## **B. Ruth reports the day's events to Naomi.**

1. (17-18) *She brings home the day's fruits to Naomi.*

**So she gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. Then she took *it* up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. So she brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she had been satisfied.**

a. **She gleaned in the field until evening, and beat out what she had gleaned:** Yes, God blessed Ruth. Yes, people were generous to her. At the same time, she did work hard. This was a sun-up to sun-down day, and Ruth worked hard all day long.

i. We should use Ruth's example to glean everything we can from the Word of God:

- Ruth worked hard.
- Ruth had to stoop to gather every grain.
- Ruth could only pick up one grain at a time.

- Ruth had to hold on to each grain, and not immediately drop it.
- Ruth took the grain home and threshed it.
- Ruth took the threshed grain and winnowed it.
- Ruth was nourished by the grain.

b. **It was about an ephah of barley:** This was about a five-and-one-half gallon tub (22 liters) of barley – a wonderful day's work to people who had nothing.

c. **Gave to her what she had kept back:** Besides all the barley grain, Ruth brought Naomi the food left over from the meal with Boaz. This was obviously a blessing for Naomi.

2. (19-23) *Naomi praises God for His goodness to her and Ruth.*

**And her mother-in-law said to her, "Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today *is* Boaz." Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed *be* he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!" And Naomi said to her, "This man *is* a relation of ours, one of our close relatives." Ruth the Moabitess said, "He also said to me, 'You shall stay close by my young men until they have finished all my harvest.'" And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "*It is* good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field." So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law.**

a. **Blessed be the name of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead:** Is this the same women who came into town saying, *call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me* (Rth 1:20)? Is this the same woman who said, *the Almighty has afflicted me* (Rth 1:21)? Of course, it is! Now she sees more of God's plan unfolding, so she can see better how all things are working together for good for those who love God.

b. **It is good, my daughter:** Of course, Naomi told Ruth, "Stay with this man Boaz!" Not only was he generous, he was **one of our near kinsmen** - the importance of which will be unfolded in the coming chapters.

### **Ruth and Boaz at the Threshing Floor**

**Rth 3:1** Some time later Naomi said to Ruth, "I must find a husband for you, so that you will have a home of your own.

Rth 3:2 Remember that this man Boaz, whose women you have been working with, is our relative. Now listen. This evening he will be threshing the barley.

Rth 3:3 So wash yourself, put on some perfume, and get dressed in your best clothes. Then go where he is threshing, but don't let him know you are there until he has finished eating and drinking.

Rth 3:4 Be sure to notice where he lies down, and after he falls asleep, go and lift the covers and lie down at his feet. He will tell you what to do."

Rth 3:5 Ruth answered, "I will do everything you say."

Rth 3:6 So Ruth went to the threshing place and did just what her mother-in-law had told her.

Rth 3:7 When Boaz had finished eating and drinking, he was in a good mood. He went to the pile of barley and lay

down to sleep. Ruth slipped over quietly, lifted the covers and lay down at his feet.

Rth 3:8 During the night he woke up suddenly, turned over, and was surprised to find a woman lying at his feet.

Rth 3:9 "Who are you?" he asked. "It's Ruth, sir," she answered. "Because you are a close relative, you are responsible for taking care of me. So please marry me."

Rth 3:10 "The LORD bless you," he said. "You are showing even greater family loyalty in what you are doing now than in what you did for your mother-in-law. You might have gone looking for a young man, either rich or poor, but you haven't.

Rth 3:11 Now don't worry, Ruth. I will do everything you ask; as everyone in town knows, you are a fine woman.

Rth 3:12 It is true that I am a close relative and am responsible for you, but there is a man who is a closer relative than I am.

Rth 3:13 Stay here the rest of the night, and in the morning we will find out whether or not he will take responsibility for you. If so, well and good; if not, then I swear by the living LORD that I will take the responsibility. Now lie down and stay here till morning."

Rth 3:14 So she lay there at his feet, but she got up before it was light enough for her to be seen, because Boaz did not want anyone to know that she had been there.

Rth 3:15 Boaz said to her, "Take off your cloak and spread it out here." She did, and he poured out almost fifty pounds of barley and helped her lift it to her shoulder. Then she returned to town with it.

Rth 3:16 When she arrived home, her mother-in-law asked her, "How did you get along, daughter?" Ruth told her everything that Boaz had done for her.

Rth 3:17 She added, "He told me I must not come back to you empty-handed, so he gave me all this barley."

Rth 3:18 Naomi said to her, "Now be patient, Ruth, until you see how this all turns out. Boaz will not rest today until he settles the matter."

## **Ruth 3:1-18**

### **Ruth 3 - Ruth Makes an Appeal**

#### **A. Naomi's instructions to Ruth.**

*1. (1-2a) Security for Ruth through a kinsman.*

**Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may be well with you? Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, *is he not our relative?*"**

a. **Then Naomi her mother-in-law said:** The time of the harvest was over, and certainly Ruth and Boaz had been around each other much in the weeks covering the barley and the wheat harvest (Rth 2:23). They had much opportunity to get to know each other.

i. However, according to the customs of the day, we can't say that Ruth and Boaz were "dating" in the way we think of "dating" in our modern culture. They were not paired off as a couple with one-on-one time with each other; rather, they spent their time together in the context of a group - the men and women who worked for Boaz in the harvest.

ii. From God's perspective, there is much in the "dating game" that works against forming healthy, lasting relationships. For many people, dating means the continual making and breaking of casual romantic relationships - patterns that teach us more how to end relationships than how to make them last.

iii. Additionally, dating can be a relatively superficial way to get to know someone. Each person in a dating relationship tends to put on a mask for the other. For

example, many women have been deceived into thinking a man is a good, nice man because he is nice to them in a dating relationship. Of course, he is! Often, he's nice because he wants something in that dating relationship. A better gauge to measure the man or the woman is to see how they act towards others in a group setting - because sooner or later, that is how they are going to treat you.

iv. So over the period of the harvests, Ruth and Boaz got to know each other pretty well - by seeing what kind of people the other was around a larger group.

b. **Shall I not seek security for you:** Naomi knew that Ruth could best be taken care of if she was married, so she suggested that she appeal to Boaz for marriage.

i. The Hebrew word for **security** in verse one is the same word for *rest* in Rth 1:9, where Naomi hoped that her daughters-in-law would find rest and security in the home of a new husband. This Hebrew word (*manowach*) speaks of what a home should be - a place of rest and security.

c. **Now Boaz... Is he not our relative:** One might easily think that this was inappropriately forward of Naomi to suggest this to Ruth. It is possible to think that Naomi plotted with Ruth to make her a man-trap, to go out and hunt down a reluctant Boaz for marriage. Not at all; Naomi's suggestion to Ruth was rooted in a peculiar custom in ancient Israel - the meaning behind the Hebrew word *goel*.

i. This was the point in Naomi's question about Boaz: **Is he not our relative?** She reminded Ruth that Boaz was their family *goel*.

ii. The *goel* - sometimes translated *kinsman-redeemer* - had a specifically defined role in Israel's family life.

- The kinsman-redeemer was responsible to buy a fellow Israelite out of slavery (Lev 25:48).
- He was responsible to be the “avenger of blood” to make sure the murderer of a family member answered to the crime (Num 35:19).
- He was responsible to buy back family land that had been forfeited (Lev 25:25).
- He was responsible to carry on the family name by marrying a childless widow (Deu 25:5-10).

iii. In this, we see that the *goel*, the kinsman-redeemer, was responsible to safeguard the *persons*, the *property*, and the *posterity* of the family. “Words from the root *g’l* are used with a variety of meanings in the Old Testament, but the fundamental idea is that of fulfilling one’s obligations as a kinsman.” (Morris)

d. **Is he not our relative:** Since Boaz was a recognized *goel* for the family of Elimelech - the deceased husband of Naomi and father-in-law of Ruth - Ruth could appeal to him to safeguard the posterity of Elimelech’s family and take her in marriage. It may seem forward to us, but it was regarded as proper in that day.

i. If Boaz did not fulfill this duty towards Elimelech (though he was now deceased), then the direct family and name of Elimelech would perish. Perpetuating the family name of Elimelech (and every man in Israel) was thought to be an important duty. These protections showed how important it was to God to preserve the institution of the family in Israel - and that it is also important to Him today.

2. (2b-5) *Naomi instructs Ruth as to how to petition Boaz to exercise his responsibilities as her goel.*

**“In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your *best* garment and go down to the threshing floor; *but* do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do.” And she said to her, “All that you say to me I will do.”**

a. **Therefore wash yourself:** Naomi, in her advice to Ruth, showed a keen knowledge of male behavior. She instructed Ruth to make herself pretty and smelling good (**anoint yourself, put on your best garment**), and to leave Boaz alone while he ate (**do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking**).

b. **Uncover his feet, and lie down:** At the appropriate time, Naomi instructs Ruth to **go in, uncover his feet, and lie down**. Some might think this was a provocative gesture, as if Ruth was told to provocatively offer herself sexually to Boaz. This was not how this gesture was understood in that day. In the culture of that day, this was understood as an act of *total submission*.

i. In that day, this was understood to be the role of a servant - to lay at their master's feet and be ready for any command of the master. So, when Naomi told Ruth to **lie down** at Boaz's feet, she told her to come to him in a totally humble, submissive way.

ii. Don't lose sight of the larger picture: Ruth came to claim a right. Boaz was her *goel*, her kinsman-redeemer, and she had the *right* to expect him to marry her and raise up a family to perpetuate the name of Elimelech. But Naomi wisely counseled Ruth

to not come as a victim demanding her rights, but as a humble servant, trusting in the goodness of her kinsman-redeemer. She said to Boaz, "I respect you, I trust you, and I put my fate in your hands."

c. **He will tell you what you should do:** Of course, this was a situation that had the potential for disaster if Boaz should mistreat Ruth in some way. But Naomi and Ruth had the chance to get to know Boaz, and they knew what kind of man he was - a good man, a godly man, one to whom Ruth could confidently submit.

i. In the marriage relationship, many husbands wish they had a wife who submitted to them the way Ruth is being told to here. But do they provide the kind of godly leadership, care, and concern that Boaz showed towards Ruth and others?

ii. In the marriage relationship, many wives wish they had a husband who loved, cared, and treated them the way Boaz did towards Ruth. But do they show the same kind of humble submission and respect Ruth showed to Boaz?

d. **All that you say to me I will do:** Ruth humbly and wisely received the counsel of her mother-in-law Naomi.

i. "On the whole, we must say, had not Boaz been a person of extraordinary piety, prudence, and continence, this experiment might have been fatal to Ruth. We cannot easily account for this transaction; probably Naomi knew more than she revealed to her daughter-in-law. The experiment however was dangerous, and should in no sense be imitated." (Clarke)

ii. "Let none be encouraged hereby to enter into God's ordinance through the devil's portal, lest they smart and smoke for it." (Trapp)

## **B. Ruth and Boaz at the threshing floor.**

### *1. (6-7) Ruth lays down at Boaz's feet.*

**So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her. And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.**

a. **He went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain:** There was a good reason why Boaz slept at the **threshing floor**. These were the days of the Judges when there was much political and social instability in Israel. It wasn't unusual for gangs of thieves to come and steal all the hard-earned grain a farmer had grown. Boaz slept at the threshing floor to guard his crop against the kind of attacks described in 1Sa 23:1.

b. **She came softly:** Ruth did just as her mother-in-law Naomi had recommended. She heard the advice, she said she would do it, and she did it.

### *2. (8-9) Ruth's request.*

**Now it happened at midnight that the man was startled, and turned himself; and there, a woman was lying at his feet. And he said, "Who are you?" So she answered, "I *am* Ruth, your maidservant. Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative."**

a. **It happened at midnight that the man was startled:** This was an amazing scene. We can well imagine that Boaz was indeed **startled**, waking up in the night as he turned in his sleep, knowing that someone was out there but not being able to see clearly because of the darkness and the sleep in his eyes.

i. Since Boaz had been there to protect against thieves, it must have given him quite a shock to wake up and know someone was there. But his shock quickly turned to wondering when he found out the visitor was a woman.

b. **Take your maidservant under your wing, for you are a close relative:** Ruth identified herself and made a simple request. In beginning with the words “**take your maidservant,**” Ruth again showed great humility and submission. She presented herself as Boaz’s servant.

c. **Under your wing:** Here, she boldly asked Boaz to take her in marriage. The phrase can also be translated as “*spread the corner of your garment over me.*” This was a culturally relevant way to say, “I am a widow, take me as your wife.”

i. “The spreading of a skirt over a widow as a way of claiming her as a wife is attested among Arabs of early days, and Jouon says it still exists among some modern Arabs.” (Morris)

ii. “Even to the present day, when a Jew marries a woman, *he throws the skirt or end of his talith over her,* to signify that he has taken her under his protection.” (Clarke)

iii. In Eze 16:8, God uses the same terminology in relation to Israel: *I spread my wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you and you became Mine, says the LORD God.*

d. **For you are a close relative:** This shows that this was not an inappropriate thing for Ruth to do towards Boaz. It was bold, but not inappropriate. Ruth understood this as she identified Boaz as her **close relative** (literally, *you are a goel*, a kinsman-redeemer).

i. Though deceased, Elimelech had the right to have his family name carried on and as *goel*, Boaz had the responsibility to do this for Elimelech. This could only happen through Boaz marrying Ruth and providing children to carry on the name of Elimelech. Ruth boldly, yet humbly and properly, sought her rights.

### 3. (10-11) Boaz's response.

**Then he said, "Blessed are you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request, for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman."**

a. **Blessed are you of the LORD, my daughter... you did not go after young men:** Apparently, there was a considerable age difference between Ruth and Boaz. It also seems that because of this, Boaz considered himself unattractive to Ruth and had therefore ruled out any idea of a romance between them.

i. This shows something else wonderful about Boaz. He had the right to force himself upon Ruth as her *goel*, but he did not. He wasn't going to just say, "There's a woman I want, and I have her by right." He was kind enough to not act as *goel* towards Ruth unless *she* desired it.

ii. It also shows something else wonderful about Ruth: She based her attraction to Boaz more on *respect* than on image or appearance. Tragically, many people fall in love with an image or an appearance, rather than with a person we can really respect.

b. **I will do for you all that you request:** Boaz made Naomi look brilliant in her advice to Ruth. The plan

worked perfectly.

c. **All the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman:** Boaz was also attracted to Ruth because of her character. We don't really know how Ruth looked, but we do know that she was a woman of godly character.

i. Literally, Boaz called Ruth a *hah-yil* woman. The basic meaning behind this Hebrew word is "strength; moral strength, good quality, integrity, virtue." This same word is used in a term for heroes in the Bible: *A mighty man of valor*. Just as courage and strength make a man a hero, so Ruth's courage and strength, shown in her virtue - make her a hero, on the Proverbs 31 kind of definition of a woman of virtue.

4. (12-13) *A potential problem: A nearer kinsman.*

**"Now it is true that I *am* a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. Stay this night, and in the morning it shall be *that* if he will perform the duty of a close relative for you; good; let him do it. But if he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you, as the LORD lives! Lie down until morning."**

a. **There is a relative closer than I:** Apparently, though Boaz was a recognized *goel* towards Ruth, there was another *goel* closer in relation to her deceased father-in-law Elimelech. So, Boaz could not exercise his right as kinsman-redeemer unless this closer kinsman-redeemer relinquished his rights towards Ruth.

b. **If he does not want to perform the duty for you, then I will perform the duty for you:** Wonderfully, Boaz wasn't willing to cut corners. He would do God's will God's way. He knew that if it was really of the LORD, then it could be done orderly and in a proper way.

### **C. Ruth goes home.**

#### *1. (14-15) Boaz sends Ruth home.*

**So she lay at his feet until morning, and she arose before one could recognize another. Then he said, "Do not let it be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." Also he said, "Bring the shawl that *is* on you and hold it." And when she held it, he measured six *ephahs* of barley, and laid *it* on her. Then she went into the city.**

a. **Do not let it be known:** Boaz and Ruth were not trying to hide anything scandalous; it was just that Boaz didn't want this nearer kinsman to learn that Ruth was now demanding her right to marriage to a *goel* before Boaz could tell him personally.

b. **He measured six ephahs of barley:** As a proper gentleman, Boaz did not send Ruth home empty-handed. Not having any chocolates, he gave her six handfuls of grain. The added word *ephahs* is almost certainly incorrect; that would be more than thirty-three gallons (120 liters) of grain, more than Ruth could carry home in her shawl.

i. Jewish traditions say that the six measures of barley given as a gift to Ruth were a sign of six pious men who would descend from her, endowed with six spiritual gifts: David, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, and the Messiah.

#### *2. (16-18) Ruth tells her mother-in-law Naomi all that happened.*

**So when she came to her mother-in-law, she said, "Is that you, my daughter?" Then she told her all that the man had done for her. And she said, "These six *ephahs* of barley he gave me; for he said to me, 'Do not go empty-handed to your mother-in-law.'" Then**

**she said, "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out; for the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day."**

a. **Sit still, my daughter... the man will not rest until he has concluded the matter this day:** This was a time of considerable anxiety for Ruth. She had claimed her right to marriage and would be married. The only question was to *whom* would she be married? Would it be to Boaz, or to the nearer *goel*? The issue would be decided that very day.

### **Boaz Redeems Ruth**

**Rth 4:1** Boaz went to the meeting place at the town gate and sat down there. Then Elimelech's nearest relative, the man whom Boaz had mentioned, came by, and Boaz called to him, "Come over here, my friend, and sit down." So he went over and sat down.

Rth 4:2 Then Boaz got ten of the leaders of the town and asked them to sit down there too. When they were seated,

Rth 4:3 he said to his relative, "Now that Naomi has come back from Moab, she wants to sell the field that belonged to our relative Elimelech,

Rth 4:4 and I think you ought to know about it. Now then, if you want it, buy it in the presence of these men sitting here. But if you don't want it, say so, because the right to buy it belongs first to you and then to me." The man said, "I will buy it."

Rth 4:5 Boaz said, "Very well, if you buy the field from Naomi, then you are also buying Ruth, the Moabite widow, so that the field will stay in the dead man's family."

Rth 4:6 The man answered, "In that case I will give up my right to buy the field, because it would mean that my own children would not inherit it. You buy it; I would rather not."

Rth 4:7 Now in those days, to settle a sale or an exchange of property, it was the custom for the seller to take off his sandal and give it to the buyer. In this way the Israelites showed that the matter was settled.

Rth 4:8 So when the man said to Boaz, "You buy it," he took off his sandal and gave it to Boaz.

Rth 4:9 Then Boaz said to the leaders and all the others there, "You are all witnesses today that I have bought from Naomi everything that belonged to Elimelech and to his sons Chilion and Mahlon.

Rth 4:10 In addition, Ruth the Moabite, Mahlon's widow, becomes my wife. This will keep the property in the dead man's family, and his family line will continue among his people and in his hometown. You are witnesses to this today."

Rth 4:11 The leaders and the others said, "Yes, we are witnesses. May the LORD make your wife become like Rachel and Leah, who bore many children to Jacob. May you become rich in the clan of Ephrath and famous in Bethlehem.

Rth 4:12 May the children that the LORD will give you by this young woman make your family like the family of Perez, the son of Judah and Tamar."

### **Ruth and Boaz Marry**

Rth 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth home as his wife. The LORD blessed her, and she became pregnant and had a son.

Rth 4:14 The women said to Naomi, "Praise the LORD! He has given you a grandson today to take care of you. May the boy become famous in Israel!

Rth 4:15 Your daughter-in-law loves you, and has done more for you than seven sons. And now she has given you a grandson, who will bring new life to you and give you security in your old age."

Rth 4:16 Naomi took the child, held him close, and took care of him.

Rth 4:17 The women of the neighborhood named the boy Obed. They told everyone, "A son has been born to Naomi!" Obed became the father of Jesse, who was the father of David.

### **The Genealogy of David**

Rth 4:18 (18-22) This is the family line from Perez to David: Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David.

## **Ruth 4:1-22**

### **Ruth 4 - The Marriage of Boaz and Ruth**

#### **A. The nearer kinsman declines his right of redemption.**

*1. (1-2) Boaz meets the nearer kinsman at the city gates.*

**Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, "Come aside, friend, sit down here." So he came aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down.**

a. **Now Boaz went:** The previous chapter left us at a dramatic point. Ruth and Boaz were obviously in love and wanted to get married, with Boaz exercising the right of the *goel* - the kinsman-redeemer. Yet, there was a kinsman closer to Ruth and he had priority. Would *he* claim the right of kinsman-redeemer towards Ruth, and keep her and Boaz from coming together?

b. **Boaz went up to the gate:** The **gate** of the city was always the place where the esteemed and honorable

men of the city sat. For an ancient city in Israel it was a combination of a city council chamber and a courtroom.

i. The city gate was “A kind of outdoor court, the place where judicial matters were resolved by the elders and those who had earned the confidence and respect of the people... a place for business and as a kind of forum or public meeting place.” (Huey)

**c. The close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by:** Boaz surprised Ruth in 3:12 by telling her there was a nearer kinsman than himself. Now this man came by the city gates as Boaz sat there.

i. Because Ruth had quietly gone back home after being at the threshing floor at Boaz’s instruction (Rth 3:14), Boaz’s approach to this nearer kinsman was planned as a complete surprise to the other man. Clearly this was a tactical advantage to Boaz.

**d. Come aside, friend, sit down here:** Literally, in the ancient Hebrew, when Boaz greeted the nearer kinsman he called him “Mr. So-and-so.” The writer of Ruth never identified the name of the nearer kinsman because he was not worthy of the honor. He declined to fulfill his obligations as the nearer kinsman to Ruth.

i. “Doubtless Boaz both knew his name, and called him by it; but it is omitted by the holy writer, partly because it was unnecessary to know it; and principally in way of contempt, as is usual, and a just punishment upon him, that he who would not preserve his brother’s name might lose his own, and lie buried in the grave of perpetual oblivion.” (Poole)

*2. (3-4) Boaz asks the nearer kinsman to redeem the land of Naomi (and Elimelech).*

**Then he said to the close relative, “Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of**

land which *belonged* to our brother Elimelech. And I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy *it* back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem *it*, redeem *it*; but if you will not redeem *it*, then tell me, that I may know; for *there is no one but you to redeem it*, and I *am* next after you.'" And he said, "I will redeem *it*."

a. **Naomi... sold the piece of land:** The duty of the *goel* - the kinsman-redeemer - was more than the duty to preserve the family name of his brother in Israel. It was also to keep land allotted to members of the clan within the clan.

i. When Israel came into the Promised Land during the days of Joshua, the land was divided among the tribes and then among the family groups. God intended that the land stay within those tribes and family groups, so the land could never permanently be sold. Every fifty years, it had be returned to the original family group (Lev 25:8-17)

ii. But fifty years is a long time. So, God made provision for land that was "sold," that it might be redeemed back to the family by the kinsman-redeemer.

iii. Again, the kinsman-redeemer had the responsibility to protect the *persons*, *property*, and *posterity* of the larger family – and all of these duties went together.

b. **The piece of land:** When Boaz brought the matter up to the nearer kinsman, he brought it up as a matter regarding *property* - something any man would be interested in. Anyone would want to buy back a piece of property and keep it in the family name by keeping it for one's self.

c. **If you will redeem it, redeem it:** When Boaz put it in terms of purely a land transaction, there was no hesitation on the nearer kinsman's part. Of course, he said, "**I will redeem it.**"

i. Certainly Ruth and Naomi were watching and listening. How their hearts must have sunk when they heard the nearer kinsman say, "**I will redeem it.**" They heard from his own lips that he would exercise his right at kinsman-redeemer, and that meant that he would gain not only the property in question, but also marry Ruth - instead of Boaz. But Boaz knew exactly what he was doing, and he had the situation all under control.

3. (5) *Boaz informs the nearer kinsman of his duty to redeem the posterity of Elimelech if he will redeem the property of Elimelech.*

**Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy *it* from Ruth the Moabite, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance."**

a. **On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabite:** Boaz then put the surprise on the nearer kinsman. He told him that he wasn't only dealing with Naomi and the property of Elimelech, he also had to deal with Ruth.

i. Because Naomi was older and beyond the years of bearing children, the nearer kinsman was not expected to marry Naomi and raise up children to the family name of her deceased husband Elimelech. But Ruth was another matter - she was able to marry and bear children.

**b. Buy it from Ruth the Moabite, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance:** Boaz explained what everyone knew – that this was a package deal. If someone was going to exercise the right of kinsman-redeemer towards the deceased Elimelech, he had to fulfill the duty in regard to *both* the property and the posterity.

i. Because of Boaz's wise (perhaps shrewd) way of framing the occasion, this was the first time the nearer kinsman considered this, and it was a pretty big question to take in all at once. When it was just a matter of property, it was easy to decide on; but if he must take Ruth as a wife, that was another matter.

*4. (6) The nearer kinsman declines his right of redemption towards the property and posterity of Elimelech.*

**And the close relative said, "I cannot redeem *it* for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem *it*."**

a. **I cannot redeem it for myself:** Though it would be great to receive the property associated with Ruth, the nearer kinsman knew that taking her into his home and raising up her children would **ruin** his **own inheritance**.

b. **Lest I ruin my own inheritance:** Probably, the man had grown sons that had already received their inheritance of lands. The problem of dividing that inheritance among future children he would have with Ruth was more than he wanted to deal with.

i. Also, no doubt, the man was married - and knew it would be awkward (at best!) to bring home Ruth as wife number two.

c. **You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it:** These were glorious words in

the ears of Ruth and Naomi. A moment before, all seemed lost when the nearer kinsman had said, "**I will redeem it.**" But Boaz's plan had a surprise and an unexpected wisdom to it. And it worked!

i. Some might have thought Boaz's plan was foolish: to gain Ruth by offering her and her land to the nearer kinsman. How could that work? But the seemingly foolish plan did work.

## **B. The ceremony to document the proceedings.**

### *1. (7-8) The custom of the sandal in transactions.*

**Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was a confirmation in Israel. Therefore the close relative said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself." So he took off his sandal.**

a. **It was the custom in former times in Israel:** Deu 25:5-10 describes the ceremony conducted when a kinsman declined his responsibility. The one declining removed a sandal and the woman he declined to honor spat in his face. But in this case, because there was not a lack of honor involved, they just did the part of the ceremony involving the sandal.

b. **Buy it for yourself:** The nearer kinsman said, "The land is yours to redeem, because you are also willing to redeem the posterity of Elimelech by taking Ruth as wife, something I am not willing to do."

### *2. (9-10) Boaz's announcement to the elders and the people.*

**And Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "You are witnesses this day that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, from the hand of Naomi. Moreover, Ruth the**

**Moabiteess, the widow of Mahlon, I have acquired as my wife, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance, that the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from his position at the gate. You *are* witnesses this day."**

a. **Boaz said to the elders and all the people:** Boaz joyfully proclaimed - legally sealing the transaction - that he would redeem both the property and the posterity of Elimelech, and (best of all!) take Ruth, the woman he loved, as his wife.

i. **That the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren and from the gate of this place** is a good description of the idea of preserving the posterity of the deceased.

b. **Ruth... I have acquired as my wife:** Back in chapter one, Ruth seemed to be giving up on her best chance of marriage by leaving her native land of Moab and giving her heart and life to the God of Israel. But as Ruth put God first, He brought her together in a relationship greater than she could have imagined. Today, God will bless those wanting to get married in the same way if they will only put Him first.

c. **You are witnesses this day:** This explains why a marriage ceremony is important, and why it should be recognized by the civil authorities. Boaz had a love for Ruth that was public, a love that wanted to be publicly witnessed and registered.

i. Sometimes, people wonder why a marriage ceremony, or a marriage license is important. "Can't we just be married before God?" But there is something severely lacking in a love that doesn't want to proclaim itself; that does not want witnesses; and that does not want the bond to be recognized by the

civil authorities. That love falls short of true marital love.

ii. So, those who say “Well, if we were on a desert island and no one was there to marry us, could we still be married before God?” need to hear the answer: “Yes - on a desert island. But you aren’t on a desert island. There are witnesses and civil authorities for you to proclaim your commitment of marital love to. God wants you to do it!”

*3. (11-12) The blessing of the witnesses to the wedding.*

**And all the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, “We are witnesses. The LORD make the woman who is coming to your house like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel; and may you prosper in Ephrathah and be famous in Bethlehem. May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring which the LORD will give you from this young woman.”**

a. **All the people who were at the gate, and the elders, said, “We are witnesses”:** No doubt, the crowd cheered! The men thought Ruth was beautiful and the women thought Boaz was handsome. Everybody could see what a romantic, loving occasion this was.

b. **Like Rachel and Leah:** These two had thirteen children between them and were the “mothers” of the whole nation of Israel. This was a big blessing to put on Boaz and Ruth.

c. **Like the house of Perez:** What was so special about Perez? The story of his birth is in Gen 38:27-30.

i. Trapp on **May your house be like the house of Perez:** “That breach-maker, as the midwife called him, because he would needs be born before his

brother, and carried away the first birthright: and afterwards became happy in a numerous and honourable posterity."

ii. "Indeed, it seems that Pharez was the ancestor of the Bethlehemites in general (1Ch 2:5; 1Ch 2:18; 1Ch 2:50 f.). Moreover, Pharez gave his name to the section of the tribe of Judah that was descended from him (Num 26:20)."

 (Kidner)

### **C. Happily ever after.**

*1. (13) Ruth and Boaz have their first child.*

**So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son.**

a. **The LORD gave her conception:** The gift of children was never taken for granted in Israel. The fact that Boaz and Ruth were able to raise up a son to the deceased Elimelech was evidence of God's blessing.

*2. (14-16) The blessed life of Naomi.*

**Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed *be* the LORD, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel! And may he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him." Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him.**

a. **Blessed be the LORD:** Look at blessed Naomi! She now had a grandson; she was now **famous in Israel**; and she got to be a nurse to her own grandson.

b. **Who has not left you this day without a close relative:** It was fitting that these blessings in the life of Naomi be given so much attention at the end of the

book. Naomi was the one whose original returning to the LORD began all this great work of God. If Naomi had not decided to go back to Bethlehem, the land of Israel, and the God of Israel, none of this would have happened.

i. This is a marvelous demonstration of what God can do through one poor woman who gets right with Him.

ii. It is also fitting because Naomi was the one who said in chapter one, *the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me... the LORD has brought me home again empty... the LORD has testified against me (Rth 1:20-21)*. If only Naomi could have seen *then* how greatly the LORD would bless her at the end!

iii. We can't blame Naomi - we certainly do the same kind of thing. But we should also learn from what she learned. We should learn that God's plan is perfect and filled with love, and even when we can't figure out what He is doing and it all seems so desperate, He still knows what He is doing. We should learn that *all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28)*.

3. (17-22) *Ruth and Boaz: Great-grandparents to David, king of Israel.*

**Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "There is a son born to Naomi." And they called his name Obed. He *is* the father of Jesse, the father of David. Now this *is* the genealogy of Perez: Perez begot Hezron; Hezron begot Ram, and Ram begot Amminadab; Amminadab begot Nahshon, and Nahshon begot Salmon; Salmon begot Boaz, and Boaz begot Obed; Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David.**

a. **There is a son born to Naomi:** The son of Ruth and Boaz was named **Obed**. He had a son name **Jesse**. He had a son named **David**. And David had a descendant named *Jesus*!

i. "God's hand is all over history. God works out His purpose, generation after generation. Limited as we are to one lifetime, each of us sees so little of what happens. A genealogy is a striking way of bringing before us the continuity of God's purpose through the ages. The process of history is not haphazard. There is a purpose in it all. And the purpose is the purpose of God." (Kidner)

b. **The father of David:** Naomi's return to Bethlehem, and the roots of David in Bethlehem, going back to Ruth and Boaz, are why Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem to register in the census of Augustus (Luk 2:1-5). Ruth and Boaz are the reason why Jesus was born in Bethlehem!

i. But the consideration of Jesus in this book of Ruth doesn't begin with the mention of King David; Jesus has been through the whole book, pictured by Boaz and the office of the kinsman-redeemer.

- The kinsman-redeemer had to be a family member; Jesus added humanity to His eternal deity, so He could be our kinsman and save us.
- The kinsman-redeemer had the duty of buying family members out of slavery; Jesus redeemed us from slavery to sin and death.
- The kinsman-redeemer had the duty of buying back land that had been forfeited; Jesus will redeem the earth that mankind "sold" over to Satan.
- Boaz, as kinsman-redeemer to Ruth, was not motivated by self-interest, but motivated by love for

Ruth. Jesus' motivation for redeeming us is His great love for us.

- Boaz, as kinsman-redeemer to Ruth, had to have a plan to redeem Ruth unto himself - and some might have thought the plan to be foolish. Jesus has a plan to redeem us, and some might think the plan foolish (saving men by dying for them on a cruel cross?), yet the plan works and is glorious.

- Boaz, as kinsman-redeemer to Ruth, took her as his bride; the people Jesus has redeemed are collectively called His bride (Eph 5:31-32; Rev 21:9).

- Boaz, as kinsman-redeemer to Ruth, provided a glorious destiny for Ruth. Jesus, as our redeemer, provides a glorious destiny for us.

ii. But it all comes back to the idea of Jesus as our *kinsman-redeemer*; this is why He became a man. God might have sent an angel to save us, but the angel would not have been our *kinsman*. Jesus, in His eternal glory, without the addition of humanity to His divine nature might have saved us, but He would not have been our *kinsman*. A great prophet or priest would be our kinsman, but his own sin would have disqualified him as our *redeemer*. Only Jesus, the eternal God who added humanity to His eternal deity, can be both the *kinsman* and the *redeemer* for mankind!

ii. Isa 54:4-8 describes the beautiful ministry of the LORD as our *goel* - our kinsman-redeemer: *Do not fear, for you will not be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame... your [Kinsman] Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel... For the LORD has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit... with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you, says the LORD, your [Kinsman] Redeemer.*

iii. From eternity, God planned to bring Ruth and Boaz together, and thus make Bethlehem His entrance point for the coming of Jesus as our true Kinsman-Redeemer, fully God and fully man. Spiritually, we need to come to Bethlehem and let Jesus redeem us. As it was written in the Christmas hymn, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*:

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars  
go by;  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light:  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee  
tonight.

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His  
heaven.

No ear may hear His coming, but in the world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear  
Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem! Descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings  
tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!